

REVISED DRAFT
For Review Only

WORKSHOP REPORT: GATEWAY DISTRICT

May 14, 2016
Philadelphia Christian
Church



Our voice. Our vision.



**EVANGELINE
CORRIDOR
INITIATIVE**

Funded in part by a federal **TIGER** grant

DISTRICT

Gateway

LOCATION

Philadelphia Christian Church – May 14, 2016 (10am – 1pm)

WORKSHOP TEAM

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Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the Author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the FHWA.

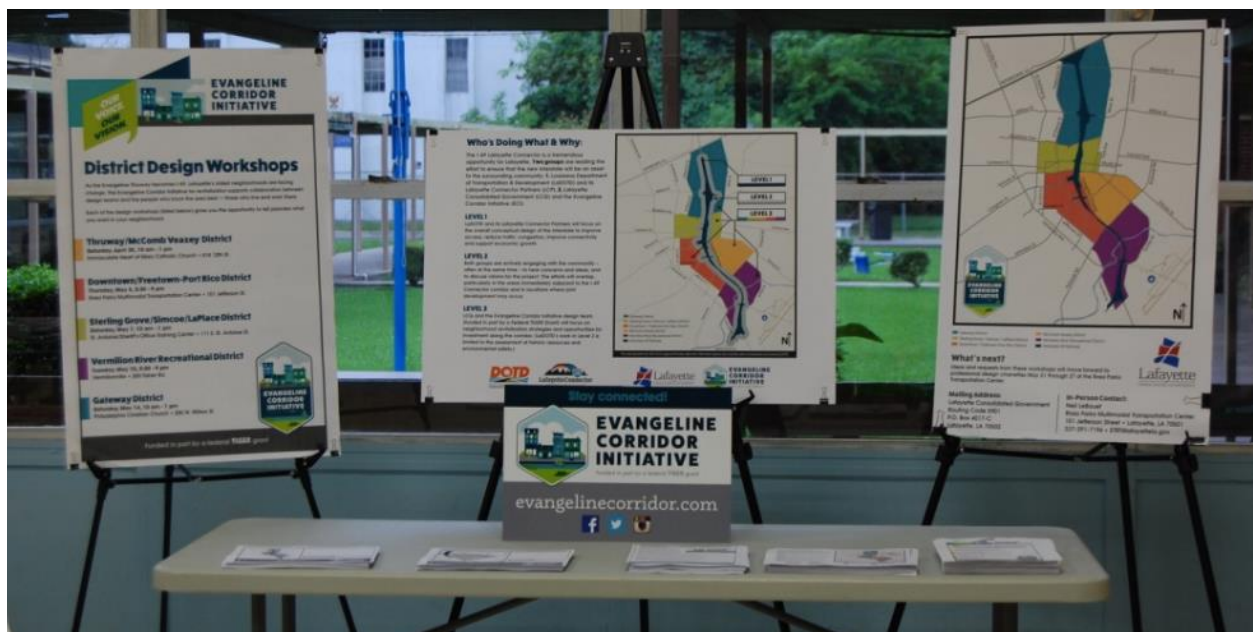
OVERVIEW

The purpose of the District Design Workshops was to bring together the communities adjacent to the existing Evangeline Thruway to lay the groundwork for developing a comprehensive future vision and plan for a renewed Evangeline Corridor. There is a great need for an extensive planning initiative to improve the districts at the neighborhood level, while linking them through a response to the unique environment that will be created by the anticipated I-49 Connector.

This Workshop Report is part of a series of five (5) district-based reports, each highlighting feedback gathered in five (5) separate 3-hour long community outreach events. The report(s) reflect the highly engaged open conversations that capture the concerns, aspirations, and suggestions that surfaced throughout various exercises led by facilitators along with groups of local neighborhood residents, business/property owners, and interested parties.

The report is divided into categories related to the overall planning effort that emerged directly from table conversations and exercises. Based around ideas of opportunities and challenges the elements include but are not limited to *economic development, culture and history, entertainment, safety, infrastructure, beautification, housing, recreation and environment and community*. A final section of the Report focuses on *Connector-Related Feedback* that serves as feedback that is collected by the ECI Team and delivered to the DOTD's Lafayette Connector Partners Team.

Lafayette Consolidated Government and the entire ECI team would like to express great appreciation to all those who participated in the workshops and shared the invaluable feedback that forms the basis of this report. The synthesized information contained herein directly informed the Charrette efforts and ultimately the plans and strategies designed for the neighborhoods and communities of each district.





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As a gateway to Lafayette, the district residents were concerned with the current retail and business offerings. Many voiced they were able to get most of their daily needs met within the district, but quality was something they felt was lacking. Additional shopping, family restaurants, and “mom and pop” stores were among the establishments the participants desired.

Many were concerned about existing businesses. Seeing stores, restaurants, and services leave the district is troublesome for the community. There is a desire to preserve the businesses that have been operating in the district and attracting a higher quality of businesses as they locate within the district. A variety of shopping and retail experiences are lacking in the neighborhood and there is a high demand for more options. Revitalizing the retail in the district could start with the Northgate Mall. Some revitalization efforts have been made, but overwhelmingly the workshop participants felt that this should be a priority as it is an eyesore in the district. Priority was also given to replacing chain and big box stores with local “mom and pop” retail.

Several participants voiced a concern regarding the disinvestment of the north part of the city and felt that it is difficult to draw economic development to an area that is so distanced. This area has a large investor base that should be brought to the table in development conversations. Tax credits including a TIF is another revitalization option.

Local Assets

Historic buildings, churches
Business owners vested in the community
Alice Boucher School
SWLA Health Center
Post office
Walmart
Super One
Home Depot
Banks
J. W. Faulk School
Shoppers Valley
Family Dollar, Dollar Tree, Dollar General

Desirable Elements

New business – hair salons, pharmacy
Amenities – shopping, eating, basic necessities
New grocery store – smaller scale
Fabric/sewing store
Hotels
More restaurants including family restaurants
Healthcare, EMT access, walk-in clinic
New office building/event center

Challenges

Motel near Priscilla behind the Shell gas station

Remove the abandoned building near Home Depot
Northgate Mall
Low income
Disenfranchised (not connected to the city)
Putting wrong businesses here
Everything going to the southside

"We're the most economically distressed area in the path"
"Build more in North Lafayette! Bring variety here and diversity"

SAFETY

The safety of the neighborhood was a concern for many participants. While most noted the sense of community and closeness of the neighbors as an asset of living in the Gateway District, many still expressed safety as a main concern. Some explained that they did not go out after a certain time and were very careful when traveling in the district. Crime, prostitutes, sex offenders, and drug activity were among some of the safety issues that were brought up at the workshop.

Many were complimentary of the current police station and happy with their relationship with the officers that work in the district. Yet many were wanting more of a police presence to mitigate the crime issues and some perceived the current police force as not proactive enough for the current level of crime. Community policing on bike and on foot and re-establishing the neighborhood watch would be beneficial for the district.

Lack of maintenance is contributing to safety issues. Overgrown trees provide opportunity for homeless to linger. Poor lighting, poles too far apart, and damaged/broken lighting promote crime in many areas.

Homelessness is an issue that many members of the community discussed. Most of the participants expressed the desire for programs that address the homeless and more centers and housing.

Desirable Elements

Additional lighting
More lighting at MLK around the walking track, near I-49, and the strip shopping mall to create sense of security
Additional police presence

Challenges

Hotel to immediate north of the Travel Host big drug problem
Homeless camp near Walmart
Safety concerns at the park

"I'd rather be safer than convenient"
"We don't want tent cities"

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Participants of the workshop voiced the need for more options for children and young adults after school. Early development, after school care, and community programs were among those listed. More community services available in the neighborhoods would aid in the revitalization of the neighborhood. Also mentioned were the block parties that the neighborhood used to have. Bringing these back would also help with the neighborhood revitalization and creating a stronger sense of community.

Many participants expressed concern for the elderly community and wondered if there are any grants or programs available to help them.

Local Assets

Church and faith community
Parental and community involvement
UL and its graduates; keep local talent
Multi-cultural people

Desirable Elements

Charter School
More colorful in the Gateway District
Preserve St. Genevieve Church
Free music
Strengthen Pastoral Alliance
Community outreach, they want their voices to be heard

Challenges

Low socio economic status
Underperforming schools

RECREATION & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The community members use the parks often and expressed a desire to increase maintenance to make the existing parks more usable. Pocket parks are desirable as well. Maintenance of existing recreation areas and facilities would allow for meaningful recreation within the district. Additional parks and open space with options for various outdoor sports are needed in the district

Local Assets

100-year oak tree
Martin Luther King Park and Heymann Park

Desirable Elements/Specific Suggestions

Keep the Visitor Center in this corridor
Upgrade park and MLK Center
Skating rink
Theater
Bowling
Upgrade park and MLK Center

Connect the parks
Botanical garden
Bird sanctuary
Educational Recreation
Museum/art facility
Area across from Northgate Mall – public park, playground for Charter School
Community gardens

Challenges

Kids don't play outside

HOUSING

Most concerns revolved around current property value and how values would be affected by I-49. Others mentioned were the elderly community and available housing options. Many were supportive of revitalization and list organizations like North Lafayette Redevelopment Authority (NLRA) and Habitat for Humanity to help with these efforts.

Local Assets

North Lafayette Redevelopment Authority (NLRA)

Desirable Elements

Repurpose old buildings
Ordinance limiting trailers

Challenges

Some residents will not pay homeowners association fees

"I'm concerned the I-49 connector will depreciate our city"

ENTERTAINMENT

Many expressed the desire for more entertainment options for all ages within the district that are safe, accessible, and well-maintained. Some entertainment options, for example a movie theater, used to be located in the district, but are no longer an available option. A diverse mix of activities would not only satisfy the neighborhood needs, but could also attract people from a wider area.

Desirable Elements

Bowling
Paint ball
Movie theater
Age-appropriate kid's area, for those under 12
Skating rink
Cart ranch
Miniature golf

Walking path
Library access
Museums
Aquarium
Art classes, floral arranging
Continuing education
Aquarium near Louisiana Avenue close to I-10
Night entertainment opportunities that feel safe
Near the post office is area with open space (land) where tennis or basketball courts could go

BEAUTIFICATION

Like its name, the Gateway District is a gateway into Lafayette and should be treated more appropriately as such. Landscaping, art, murals, lighting, and other gateway elements were listed as desirable elements. Overall beautification of the homes in the district and an improved streetscape on most streets for enhanced walkability and increased quality of life.

Landscaping and street trees are welcomed beautifying additions to the neighborhood. These elements would make the community aesthetically pleasing and more livable. Conversely, dilapidated properties, abandoned vehicles, vacant housing, and lack of maintenance have a very negative effect on the community and character of the district.

Litter and trash were mentioned as being a huge problem in this district. Most felt that the city did not give attention to these items. A more grassroots effort may include neighborhood clean-up days driven by community members to help get the trash out of the district.

Noise was also a source of concern. The heavy traffic along the Thruway produces a great deal of noise disrupting homeowners. Most were afraid the I-49 project would only add to this issue. Although many wanted to mitigate the noise problems, it was indicated that an unattractive sound barrier (like that on Ambassador Caffery) was not a desirable solution.

Proper lighting was mentioned as a neighborhood need. In addition to safety lighting, lighting to enhance architectural and landscape features as well as artistic lighting in key areas are desirable elements in this districts. Emphasis was placed on making the Gateway District “more colorful.”

Desirable Elements

More maintenance (cut grass, change/repair lighting, trim trees, etc.)
More art
Parks and gardens near Home Depot
Enhanced streetscape
Re-do Simcoe Street
Everywhere they are doing work – plant trees!
Clean up area near Patterson and N. Richter
Gateway and entrance signage

Challenges

Pollution
Vacant land and blight
Bayberry Point overgrown
Garbage cans and bins staying on streets devalue property
Tear down hotel that edges interstate

"We like the open and quiet and want to keep it that way"
"Gateway to Blight"

INFRASTRUCTURE

Most people felt there has been no attention from city or parish regarding infrastructure concerns and maintenance. Streets are in poor condition and need resurfacing in many areas. Poorly maintained drainage has led to flooding in several areas.

Desirable Elements

More maintenance
Re-do Simcoe Street
Re-stripping at Willow/Thruway not visible especially at night
Resurface roads
Bayberry needs a lot of work
Ditches need to be cut and cleaned

Challenges

City response poor at best
Streets and drainage – lack of maintenance

ACCESS/MOBILITY/CONNECTIVITY

The heavy traffic on the Evangeline Thruway traversing the Gateway District causes access and connectivity issues. Crossing the Thruway is difficult and many neighbors are frustrated by the lack of priority given to the neighborhood traffic.

Residents asked for a more walkable, pedestrian friendly experience with appropriately scaled and properly maintained sidewalks. Many residents are dependent on walking as their only mode of transportation, especially the elderly, so walkability is a priority in the community. In some cases, additional or wider sidewalks may be necessary and in other cases lack of maintenance negatively affecting walkability.

Bike lanes on Moss Street are perceived as wasted and most of the community is not in favor. However, often stated was the need for bike lanes and trails.

Local Assets

Transit System

Desirable Elements

Service road along I-10
Request Martin Luther King name for Willow Exit
Bridge over the coulee to El Sido's
Covered bus stops
Bus to airport, mall, and DMV
Crosswalks
Bike trails
More bus stops
Need more walkability

Challenges

People drive fast even if speed limit is low
Concerned about being cut off from Moss Street

"Big concern is that this won't happen while we are still here. Will our kids or grandkids see it?"

CONNECTOR-RELATED FEEDBACK

NOTES ON THE CONNECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & OPTION CONCEPTS

General Concerns

How will this affect us?

Will the roads change?

Will we be able to walk around (after connector is built)?

Elevated roads (like Baton Rouge) make me cringe.

Regardless of the interstate design we don't want the (negative) integrity of the neighborhood to remain.

We don't want (what happened to) NOLA or Baton Rouge

How will the state upkeep the corridor – perpetual maintenance

What advantages will this (Interstate project) have on us?

Specific Connector Options Impact Concern

In addition to Willow, is there another connector exit?

Not in agreement with all overpass locations.

Elevation start and end and impact on existing businesses and residents.

Suggestions and Desires

Put tennis/basketball courts underneath the new Interstate.

Build an overpass to cross over.

It's our job to get "Camellia Boulevard" look (with) green space and walking paths along the Interstate.

Corridor should not be over a blighted area.

We need lighting near I-49.

Design it to abate homelessness.

Do not want interstate to house the homeless.

Request Martin Luther King name for Willow exit.